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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (10/06): "WHAT IS LEFT OF PEACE EFFORTS?"

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Main Stories:  
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The lead photo in all dailies shows two "Jewish settlers" lighting celebratory lamps after moving into a previously Palestinian-owned home in the Old City of Jerusalem. Al Quds runs a front page photo of the Mufti of Jerusalem next to quotes of the Mufti declaring the sale or turn-over of Palestinian real estate to Israeli groups as tantamount to, "treason against God." All front pages highlight reporting about settlement activities in Jerusalem, noting that the "extremist Jewish society" Atirit Khohanim will organize a celebration for a separate, recent move by a Jewish family into a, "Muslim neighborhood of East Jerusalem." The stories report that more than 900 Jews are now living in houses bought by Atirit Khohanim.

Separate settlement reporting leads in Al Ayyam and Al Quds. The two papers, and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front page run statements by the Arab League warning of "unprecedented" Israeli efforts to judaize Jerusalem and take over land in the West Bank. Reports explain that Israeli settlers are "smuggling" mobile homes into the West Bank to establish thousands of new settlement units. The dailies highlight the assertion by Israeli daily Maariv that, despite official Israeli commitments made by the Israeli Prime Minister and his deputy, nearly 15,000 new settlers have moved to the West Bank, according to the Israeli director general of the settlement council.

Al Ayyam's front page reports that Israel has issued an ultimatum to dozens of Palestinian Bedouin families to leave their houses in preparation of demolition. The families, whose members number 250, are from the Mlihat clan near Mali Mukhmas in the East Jerusalem area.

All dailies highlight an in-depth interview with visiting French Foreign Minister Kouchner. Al Ayyam runs the news under the headline: Respecting the Road Map Peace Plan. Kouchner is quoted stating that he is, "not denying having semi-official contacts with Hamas. Kouchner adds that he considers a freeze on Israeli settlement activities to be a priority, in accordance with commitments pledged at Annapolis. Kouchner also notes that, "economic activity cannot make a real start under current Israeli limitations," and calls for the reopening of Palestinian institutions in Jerusalem, starting with the Chamber of Commerce and the Housing Council. He states that the idea of deploying international forces to the Palestinian Territories would facilitate Israeli withdrawal and bolster Palestinian security efforts. According to reports, he concludes that it is an idea worth considering as part of a political agreement between Israel and Palestinians.

Comments by Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Fayyad about internal affairs and the peace process make above-the-fold, front page reporting in all dailies. Al Quds highlights Fayyad calling for the establishment of a national consensus government and warning that the two-state solution is endangered by Israeli settlement activities. Al Ayyam highlights Fayyad stating that, "it is time refocus the peace process by focusing on the Palestinian peace initiative of 1988." In a related front page article, Al Ayyam quotes Israeli Foreign Minister and Kadima party chief Livni stating that she remains committed to peace talks with the Palestinians, stating, "Annapolis continues."

The three dailies, Maan and Wafa headline quotes by Egypt's

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President Mubarak stating that Egypt will not dictate positions to any Palestinian parties regarding upcoming Palestinian talks in Cairo. Al Quds reports that several Arab and Islamic countries would support an extension of Palestinian Authority President Abbas' term in office if "unity dialogue" in Cairo fails. Maan and Al Quds quote Walid Al Awad, Peoples Party Secretary General, stating that the "new" government would be more than a technocrat government and would be tasked with uniting Palestinian institutions, reconstruction, and preparing for presidential and legislative elections in 2009, within the first 6-9 months. Al Awad adds that a proposal is on the table to deploy civil police to Gaza and establish a strong security council. An Arab security committee would oversee the reform of security services in the West Bank and Gaza, according to Al Awad's comments to the press. The comments come after reporting from the weekend that Hamas has rejected the idea of forming a technocrat government.

Front page reports in all dailies announce an expected economic recession and collapse of the stock market in Israel. The newspapers comment that the American recession will eventually cause a recession in Israel and that the American bailout plan cannot "rescue" the American economy. Stories on the fall-out of the U.S. economic crisis appear daily on front pages.

Al Ayyam runs a Reuters story about U.S. policy towards Syria on its front page. The story notes that the U.S. Administration is reconsidering its policies regarding relations with Syria in light of the close relationship between Syria and France.

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Weekend stories  
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Sunday, October 5, 2008

Al Quds' front page announced that Secretary Rice has asked Egypt to host a meeting with Israeli, Palestinian, and Quartet representatives to discuss the status of peace talks before President Bush ends his term in office. Egypt responded with support for the request, the paper reports, and adds that French sources disclosed on September 20, that the US Administration is exerting pressure on Israelis and Palestinians to release a memorandum of understanding summarizing achievements made in talks.

Citing Wafa, Al-Hayat Al-Jadida led with a story about Palestinian Authority President Abbas' call on the EU to work with the U.S. to consolidate its political role in the peace process. Abbas stressed the importance of the return of Gaza to the "homeland," highlighting Egypt's role in achieving national unity and dialogue, the paper reported.

Al Ayyam and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida reported that Secretary Rice will make a tour of the region in the middle of October in a new bid to push forward talks between Israelis and Palestinians. She will also explore whether it is possible for the two sides to reach an agreement on final status issues, according to reporting. In related news, Al Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida quote Palestinian Authority (PA) Presidency spokesperson Abu Rudaynah asserting that the coming weeks and months will be critical for and leave a great, lasting impact on the internal Palestinian situation and the peace process. For his part, PA Prime Minister Fayyad commented on Al-Hayat Al-Jadida's front page that Palestinians are adamant about establishing a Palestinian state, the blueprints of which, "shall rise from the streets of the Old City of Jerusalem and Nablus."

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Saturday, October 4, 2008

"President Abbas to visit India and Syria soon," Al Ayyam's front page announced. Abbas' media advisor announced that Abbas will begin a tour of Arab and Asian capitals soon and will meet with Secretary of State Rice in Ramallah in the next two weeks.

Clashes over olive harvesting in villages near Hebron were front page news in Al Ayyam. Settlers near Ramallah and Hebron clashed with Palestinians and peace activists as Palestinians sought, "to harvest olives from areas confiscated by Israel." Al Quds' front page noted injuries of protesters by the Israeli military during the weekly anti separation-wall marches in the West Bank towns of Ni'lin, Bil'in and Al Ma'sara.

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BLOCK QUOTES:  
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¶1. Al Ayyam publishes an opinion piece by columnist Samih Shbib under the title, "A dialogue waiting to be clarified" (10/06): " Hamas has its own agenda [that does not include] the PA and PLO... such an agenda bets on the success of Iranian expansion and consequently, the resurgence of regional Islamic extremist factions... [however,] developments are not in favor of Hamas betting... the goals behind Hamas' use of arbitrary rocket attacks and killing are now clear to everyone. They were meant to destroy the Palestinian Authority (PA), undermine its policies and sabotage any serious progress between Palestinians and the Israelis... to show that the PA is surrendering while Hamas is depicted as the resistance... After Hamas assumed office, they stopped all the bombing and killing, so all is now revealed and they have used force to end all opposition... What will Hamas do now after all its pretexts have fallen away?"

¶2. Al Quds editorial was titled, "What is left of peace efforts?" (10/06): "While Egypt was announcing that... Rice asked Cairo to host an Israeli-Palestinian meeting with Quartet members... and while French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner was announcing that Europe will continue support for peace efforts and the establishment of a Palestinian state, it was declared in Israel that the number of [West Bank Israeli] settlers has increased by 15,000 during Olmert's tenure and that [settlers] have moved 400 mobile homes into settlements since the beginning of this year... At the same time senior members of Israel's Kadima party are ignoring statements made by Olmert regarding [the need for] Israeli withdrawal from almost all of the occupied territories in order to achieve peace, and [Kadima] stressed that these statements do not represent Kadima policy nor the policies of the other two major parties, Likud and Labor... If Europe and America really want to revitalize the peace process, what is required is to realize conditions for peace, not just hold more conferences and launch slogans that Israel ignores as [they have since] Madrid, Oslo and

finally Annapolis and Paris, in addition to innumerable other  
summits..."

Walles